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Michael J. Harrington

Democracy and Secret Operations

We are not going to run the kind of intelligence service that other countries run. We are going to run one in the American society and the American constitutional structure . . .

—CIA Director William Colby;
July 2, 1973.

Less than two months after Mr. Colby made that pledge to the senators who were to confirm his nomination as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, he, along with the other members of a secret committee chaired by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, authorized the expenditure of \$1 million to help destabilize the duly elected government of Chilean President Salvador Allende. The actual expenditure was made unnecessary by the violent military overthrow, less than a month later, of the Allende government. But even though no U. S. assistance was provided for the specific purpose of the coup, funding over \$8,000,000 had been secretly authorized by the United States since 1969 to help ensure that result.

The question rather starkly posed by the revelation of secret and deep involvement of the United States in efforts to bring down the Allende government comes to this: What type of international behavior is consistent with the principles of a democratic society, and what are its leaders' obligations to keep its citizens informed. Secret CIA operations abroad, if they are to remain covert, presumably cannot be publicly announced. But at what price — measured in the loss of integrity of our democratic process and its officials — do we preserve that secrecy? And to what end do we exercise our power covertly? These are the issues that must be explored in the context of the current furor over our current Chile policy and not brushed aside by sweeping references to "national security" and the "national interest."

Taking the Chilean intervention on its own terms, it surely must be seen as an utter failure. President Ford argues that we acted to help preserve the free media and opposition political parties in Chile. Such an analysis does not even begin to explain why \$3,000,000 was authorized to defeat Allende six years before he became President. Setting aside for the moment that question, as well as how \$350,000 in bribes to members of the Chilean Congress to reverse the results of a popular election could fulfill those goals, let us see what the United States received for its investment. A military junta now rules Chile for the foreseeable future under a "state of siege" declaration, which has resulted in the suspension of all political parties, the indefinite adjournment of the Congress, the usurpation of the power of the civilian courts, and the censorship of all news media. The response of the Nixon administration, which authorized the initial anti-Allende expenditures, was to request a \$65,000,000 increase in military and economic aid for the new government.

This is not to argue that our policies in Chile would have been

The writer, a Democrat, is a U.S. Representative from Massachusetts' 6th District.

they had succeeded. Rather, the facts indicate that our real motive lay elsewhere. Perhaps, as Mr. Kissinger has reliably reported to have said at the time, "I don't see why we need standby and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."

Rightly or wrongly it seems evident that former President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger ordered covert action against the Allende government because they feared Chile would "go Communist." In light of that administration's opening of relations with China and search for detente with the Soviet Union, such a policy goal is clearly anomalous. In Chile during the 1970s, we were pursuing already discredited dogmas of the 1950s and 1960s.

Our real concern now ought to be why this happened. The answer will not be found in a runaway band of cloak and dagger slouches on the CIA payroll who got out of control in Chile. President Ford himself stressed that the decisions on Chile were made in

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the White House, in meetings with senior representatives of the CIA, the State Department, the Defense Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and chaired by the President's national security adviser. All decisions by this body, known as the 40 Committee, must be approved by the President before implementation, a State Department spokesman recently observed.

During the course of its deliberations on Chile, the resolve of this body to intervene in Chile was apparently unmoved by some of the more tumultuous domestic political events of this century: a Senate committee publicly investigated the role of the CIA and the International Telephone and Telegraph Company in attempts to prevent the election of Allende in 1970 amid a national outcry over the impropriety of such plan; the investigation by the Senate Watergate Committee of illegal use of the CIA in the Watergate affair and related activities of the "plumbers"; strong congressional and public criticism of a secret policy to bomb the Cambodian people while the President was proclaiming our "neutrality" in that conflict. Perhaps, in the haughty atmosphere of the Nixon White House, the message never got through. But it is now time to

of these events: The American people will no longer stand for secret U.S. interference in the affairs of other nations nor the official lies and deceptions that invariably accompany those policies. We must end the CIA coverup, just as we pierced the secrecy of the Watergate coverup, and remind those involved that such activities are at odds with the fundamental premises on which this nation's government was based.

In an era in which our avowed aim is to seek reconciliation and cooperation with other nations, regardless of their ideology, no useful purpose can be served by perpetuating a policy of covert intrusion in the internal affairs of others. Secret decisions to influence foreign elections, financially support foreign candidates or political parties, provide arms to local political groups, or disrupt foreign governments will easily undermine the well-intentioned public efforts of this country to further world peace.

Just as significantly the values of our domestic political structure are being severely challenged by the continuation of covert operations abroad. The system of CIA secrecy forces officials to mislead the Congress and the American people. The system prevents any effective review of important foreign policy decisions by anyone outside of a select club of covert decision-makers—and overly deferential legislators. The system invariably involves American power on the side of political corruption, international instability and interference with the principles of self-determination. We can no longer measure our conduct by that of our supposed rivals but by the standards we have set for ourselves as a nation. When covert activities abroad result in a serious threat to those standards—as they have in the case of our Chile policy—then the policy of covert activities must yield. I seriously question how long we can maintain a free society under the pressure that CIA covert operations exert on the principles of democracy in government truthfulness essential to such a society. CIA Director Colby himself recognized the need to operate his agency within the limits imposed by our constitutional structure. It is time once again to bring the governmental power of this nation within those limits.

The role of the CIA in foreign policy, as authorized by the highest officials of the executive branch, must be fully and openly re-examined. The fiction that Congress exercises any real control and scrutiny over CIA activities must be dispelled and the existing mechanisms replaced by an effective congressional review structure, consistent with the democratic process. The arbitrary exclusion of CIA oversight from the normal foreign policy deliberations in Congress must be ended. More fundamentally, the future direction of intelligence policy must be wrested from the exclusive and secret control of special interests in both the executive branch and in Congress and forced to face the more demanding test of free and open debate that our